

Motoring New Car Road Test

The Mercedes-Benz EQC takes on

The EQC is Mercedes-Benz's core electric SUV – but has it got what it takes to fend off key competitors? **Jack Evans** takes one for a test drive

AS we're all aware, the electric segment is one which is quickly rising in importance as we approach a time when all new things petrol and diesel-powered will be outlawed. As a result, we're getting some serious variety when it comes to EVs, with battery-powered cars of all shapes and sizes coming to market.

This one is the Mercedes-Benz EQC and it's a premium take on the electric car recipe designed to take on the likes of Audi's e-tron. At the higher end of the price structure, the EQC is an SUV designed to encapsulate everything people love about Mercedes but with that all-important electric powertrain. Let's find out how it gets on.

What's new?

The EQC was the first car to be launched under Mercedes-Benz's wider EQ brand, which will incorporate all of the firm's electric vehicles. As a result, the EQC has been designed to give a snapshot of Mercedes' future electric direction, both in terms of technology and also outright design.

It's why the EQC looks strikingly different from the other 'normal' cars in the firm's range, while the electric powertrain it uses is really quite cutting-edge. It all ties together to create a car which is in keeping with the wider brand – there's no mistaking it for anything but a Mercedes – but looks forward to the future, too.

What's under the bonnet?

The EQC utilises a clever set-up which sees a small electric motor positioned on each axle, equipping the car with four-wheel-drive. When travelling at cruising speeds, the EQC is predominantly front-wheel-drive, with the rear motor chirping in when you require more performance and additional acceleration. Combined, they produce 402bhp and a sizeable 760Nm, which means that the EQC can sprint from 0-60mph in 4.8 seconds and hit a top speed of 112mph.

But we want to know about the range,



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right? According to Mercedes, the EQC will return between 232 and 259 miles from a single charge, which is more than enough for most journeys. A 10-80% charge via a rapid 110kW charger will take just 40 minutes, while a 10-100% charge conducted through a home wallbox will take 11 hours.

What's it like to drive?

Get behind the wheel of the EQC and one thing which is immediately noticeable is how compact the car feels around you. This is no small vehicle; it's a mid-size SUV, so certainly has some exterior heft to it, but to drive it feels far smaller. That's no bad thing, mind you.

Up to speed and the EQC's whisper-quiet cabin is relaxing, while the electric powertrain makes short work of normal driving duties too. But lean on the throttle a touch more and the EQC changes considerably, with huge bursts of acceleration within easy grasp even with moderate presses of the accelerator.

It's a properly quick car and, while perhaps not as sharp-edged as a Tesla Model X when it comes to outright acceleration, it's got more than enough on tap to leave even the most keenly-driven hot hatch well behind.

The additional weight of the batteries does make its presence known around town where the EQC struggles to maintain

its composure over potholes and speed bumps, but get up to high speeds and the ride settles considerably.

How does it look?

'Our' test car – finished in metallic black paint – looked particularly stealthy, with the large light bar at the front giving the whole car a space-age feel. The EQC looks excellent at night, where its huge LED lights and long rear light bar combine to give off a Tron-like impression.

But it's far from gimmicky, with the whole car's design combining to look just as classy as other cars in the Mercedes line-up. The badge on the front is certainly hard to miss, but against the well-resolved Audi e-tron it does well. It toes the line between being interesting enough to showcase itself as something different to the norm without coming across 'over the top'.

What's it like inside?

The interior of the EQC is pretty standard-fit Mercedes, which is to say bristling with equipment. The 10.25-inch infotainment system – running Mercedes' latest MBUX operating software – is your main point of contact for all things media. It looks good and responds well, and when combined with the 10.25-inch driver display gives the impression of one solid piece

of glass. It helps to give the cabin a clean, sharp look.

The cabin space, in general, feels pretty much on-par for a mid-size SUV; there's a decent amount of room for those sitting in the back, though the roofline does scrape lower which could cause some issues for passengers. There's a decent 500 litres of boot space to make use of, too.

What's the spec like?

As mentioned, the main infotainment set-up in the EQC is one of the best in the business and is helped no end by the ability to use either the touchscreen or a 'pad' located where you might expect to find the gear selector. It's not as intuitive to use as the old rotary wheel, but once you're up to speed with pointing and clicking at what you need via the control pad, things are pretty simple.

The EQC also comes with a vast amount of safety equipment as standard, including active brake assist, active lane departure control and cruise control.

Verdict

With more choice comes more competition and that's certainly the case with the electric car market. The EQC is hardly lacking in rivals, with the likes of Tesla and Audi both vying for the top spot in premi-



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premium rivals in the EV segment



■ The EQC is a properly quick car

um EVs. However, Mercedes has created a car which is more than worthy of competing in the segment, bringing the high-tech

and premium feel that attracts people to the brand alongside a genuinely capable electric powertrain.

With an impressive range, this is an electric vehicle which dispels much of the distance-worries people have about electric

cars. Combine that with all of the other positives we've highlighted and you've got a package which is hard to beat.

Fast facts

- Model: Mercedes-Benz EQC
- Base price: From £59,484 from Jacksons
- Model as tested: EQC 400 AMG Line
- Engine: Dual electric motors with batteries
- Power: 402bhp
- Torque: 760Nm
- Max speed: 112mph
- 0-60mph: 4.8 seconds
- MPG: N/A
- Emissions: 0g/km CO2
- Range: 259 miles



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